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TEACHER SELECTION--"HOW TO WEED OUT THE DUDS."

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The process of initial teacher selection must take into account the changing role of the teacher. The selection process must place more emphasis on change orientation, specialization and cooperation, learning-teaching strategy, experimentation, and professional preparation. Partnerships should be developed between school districts and training institutions so that programs can be instituted to improve marginal and less experienced teachers. In this way beginning teachers can be judged on the basis of their potential. Teacher participation in this broader selection process should be encouraged along reasonable and beneficial lines. (TT)

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of School Administrators (Atlantic City, New Jersey, February 17-21, 1968), by George R. Madden.

TEACHER SELECTION--"HOW TO WEED OUT THE DUDS"

Because it is probably no coincidence that the subtitle of this section "How to Weed Out the Duds" is the same as the title of two articles which have appeared in School Management (December 1964 and February 1967), I am tempted to address myself to a rebuttal of the kind of thinking revealed in those articles. I want to resist the temptation, however, partly because it would give this paper a somewhat negative and argumentative tone, and partly because I am not quite sure that those articles were meant to be taken seriously.

For example: I find barbaric and misleading the notion that the selection process should include a requirement that the applicant teach a sample lesson in the district to which he is applying. Even though he is given some advanced warning, a teacher cannot come up with a reasonable sample of his talents when asked to work on a one-shot only basis with a group of unfamiliar children in an unfamiliar setting. A clever applicant will of course come up with some device to capture attention, but the results are more likely to be a sample of pedological pyrotechnics than a sample of effective teaching. Teaching and learning are, after all, processes more than events. The process is not likely to be one that can be begun and completed in a single class period--especially one that has been shortened to allow time for the

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applicant to be sent to the hall while the selectors discuss his competence with the children'. It may be of course that the author did not intend this to be taken as a serious suggestion. He may have been dealing in exaggeration in order to point up the fallacy of such a system. If he was indulging in this sort of repertorial over-kill I am relieved.

One additional reason for not confining this paper to the questions raised by those articles, is that to do so would be to limit the subject drastically. There are a number of important issues in teacher selection which would not be raised by or even touched by comments limited to the procedures described in those articles. I will therefore attempt to cover several other areas in the teacher selection process with no further references to the articles.

Importance of the Teacher Selection Process

I should like to begin by affirming the importance of the teacher selection process. There is nothing more vital to quality education than the quality of the faculty. Selecting carefully is the first and perhaps most vital step in securing a good staff. This has always been so.

Careful initial selection will become more important than ever because dismissal will become more difficult. I refer, of course, to the probability--almost the certainty--that teacher organizations will write into their collective bargaining agreements tougher and tougher restrictions on dismissals.

It is necessary for their survival that such organizations secure protection and security for their members. Under conditions of inter-organizationed rivalry such as exist at the present, these organizations must be aggressive in their efforts to protect the rights of their members including especially the right to freedom from what they may feel constrained to call unreasonable discharge. This aggressiveness is likely to produce a situation in which even a reasonable discharge is difficult to effect. The fact that most teachers are already under some form of tenure law has delayed this from becoming a major issue at present. But I expect it to increase as an issue in the future. If you think that tenure laws have been difficult on this score let me predict that--"you ain't seen nothing yet."

Some Selection Criteria

The criteria used in the modern selection process should reflect the changes taking place in the role of the teacher. The older standard concept of a teacher as an all-round pedagogue--that is one person able to minister to all the educational needs of a group of children of wildly differing abilities, interest and motivations--is giving way to a newer concept which conceives of teachers fitting a variety of roles each designed to more effectively meet specific kinds of teaching and learning needs. Each role must have a clearly different set of criteria, each specifying the different

kinds of requirements for that role. In this sense the selection process is becoming more and more complex. In the past we were all too inclined to think of the good teacher in terms of a single model. Today this single model must be replaced with a set of varying models from which the appropriate one may be selected for a given teacher role.

Additionally we must guard against the tendency to think that there is only one way or even one best way to fill a given role. We must admit that even given a fairly well defined and specific role there are a variety of ways in which differing individuals could fill it and yet each could fill it well.

There is a natural human inclination on the part of the person doing the selecting to judge the applicant in terms of the kind of teacher the selector was--or thinks he was. This inclination is doubtless the result of the normal operation of a strong ego-structure. Administrators--who most often are the selectors--have as a group, I suspect, stronger than average ego-structures. I hasten to add this is not because of any inherent superiority of administrators but is more likely the result of natural selection. Those without strong ego-structures are not likely to last long in the jungle of public school administration. They will more likely have slunk away perhaps to a position in higher education. The fact that they are so constituted compels administrators to be especially vigilant against the tendency to cast his image of a good teacher in his own likeness.

The changing concept of the teacher role to which I referred a moment ago plus changes in our knowledge about knowledge seems to require that the following criteria receive increasing emphasis in the selection process.

1. Change orientation. Because change has become a permanent feature of the educational scene it is imperative that in selecting teachers we make an effort to select those who are conscious of their role as change agents. It is not possible any longer to conceive of a teacher who presides in a stable curricular or organizational environment and directs a series of predetermined, recurring learning tasks. The teacher must be change oriented in his conception of his academic speciality, his methodology and his perception of the organizational and social context within which he and his students live.

2. Specialization and Cooperation. The teaching role is becoming so complex and demanding that it is nearly unmanageable. There is growing recognition of this and the common pattern of the solutions is some sort of specialization accompanied by a differentiation of teacher role. This means that in an increasing number of cases we will be looking for the teacher specialist rather than the teacher generalist. A careful re-examination is in order if we are to be sure that we are not measuring new teachers with old yardsticks.

Teachers will increasingly be expected to cooperate with other teacher specialists in the classroom. This means that the ability to enter into cooperative working relationships with peers must become a major criterion in teacher selection.

Teachers will also be expected more and more to direct the efforts of a variety of para-professionals. This will mean that the teacher will function in part as an administrator and as a supervisor. I don't need to tell this audience that administration and supervision are difficult arts which require special talents and conscious effort as well as some formal study. Possession of some degree of these qualities should be part of the selection criteria for future teachers.

3. The teacher as a learning-teaching strategist. The complexity of modern education allows no room for the concept of the teacher as a dispenser of knowledge. In face of an increasing and changing storehouse of human knowledge we have come to realize (although we don't always act in concert with this realization) that we must emphasize the process of knowledge acquisition rather than the fact of knowledge possession. This means that the effective teacher will be concerned with teaching students how to learn more than with teaching them facts. He will also need to be aware that there are a variety of ways to learn which can and should be chosen with reference to the particular learner and the particular context.

Thus the teacher must know something about both teaching and learning strategies and must be facile in applying them. It seems to me that this is going to require a much firmer base in learning theory than was ever true in the past.

4. The teacher experimenter. Because the context, content and methods of teaching are changing and will continue to change, one important characteristic of the good teacher will be the willingness and ability to experiment. This requires not only some particular skills but a particular attitude in which the teacher views teaching as an experimental act. An entirely different mind set is necessary to accommodate this view than was necessary to the older view of the teacher who knew exactly what was to be taught and how it was to be done. This calls for the holding of only tentative hypotheses about both content and method and a willingness to change either as a result of evaluation of ones previous decisions and efforts.

5. The over-valued degree. There has for long existed an over-emphasis by school people on the possession of degrees by candidates for teaching positions. This over-emphasis is now become even more formalized as it begins to appear in negotiated agreements between school boards and teacher organizations. Such organizations whether in education or in industry seek to protect and secure themselves and their members by freeing them from arbitrariness in selection, promotion and salary determination.

The most common device for doing this is to insist on reliance on some sort of objective criteria. In industry this resulted in the over-emphasis on seniority--a trend already noticeable in education--and a resistance to subjective evaluations. Degrees earned (or courses passed) may be increasingly appealing because they seem to be objective. But of course we know that there is not a direct and constant relationship between degrees held and teaching performance. The degree signifies the completion of a set of tasks or of a degree of growth which we devoutly hope supplies the teacher with a basis for improving teacher performance. But no one would claim that teachers with more degrees will necessarily perform better than teachers with fewer degrees. Therefore the role of the degree as a criterion of selection, retention, promotion or placement on a salary schedule should if possible be re-examined soon before it becomes so firmly "locked in" to formal agreements that we can never change it.

Scope of the Selection Process

Since the title of this session does not seem to put limits on the definition of the selection process, I should like to do so myself and I wish to define it somewhat more broadly than just the process between applying and the signing of the initial contract. Rather, I would like to define it as the process between applying and the granting of tenure, at least, and I should like to point out that the "weeding" operation should not be just a

matter of identifying and eliminating the duds. Rather it should include the possibility that by careful and intelligent handling those marginal cases--i.e. prospects who could become either duds or successful teachers--can be developed and improved. This is the in-service dimension of the selection process. It would be a great mistake for any selector to think that the products of our teacher training institutions are upon graduation and certification ready to immediately assume all of the varied roles demanded of an experienced teacher. Rather we should view the beginner as an initiate who must be judged largely in terms of his potential, and we should take the development of this potential as one of our more serious responsibilities.

My impression is that colleges of education are beginning to emphasize more and more the fact that their products are not ready to be thrown off the end of the dock and told to sink or swim. We are recognizing that there must be a much closer relation between pre-service and in-service education and are making some plans to achieve a closer relationship.

New Partnerships in Teacher Selection

This will call for a partnership between school districts and training institutions. The complete teacher is after all not the product only of those in the training institution alone but of all those work with them in the field as well.

Principals, supervisors, superintendents, board members, and senior teachers all contribute in differing degrees to the production of a good teacher.

In a recent proposal drafted by Dr. Fred Edmonds, the College of Education at the University of Kentucky has outlined a partnership between local school districts and the college in the in-service program.

The proposal suggests that the preparation program should conceive of a planned curriculum extending beyond graduation and certification and into the in-service program as well. The in-service program would not be a separate, unrelated experience designed to meet the needs of expediency in overcoming immediate problems. Instead it would be an orderly arrangement for encouraging and providing for continued professional growth on the part of the teacher.

Our proposal does not anticipate the college taking over the in-service or professional growth program. Rather it visualizes the separate jurisdictions of the schools and the colleges and seeks cooperation in the areas where the two overlap.

More specifically we have described a parallel between teacher growth and program development in the schools with four conceptual stages in each.

Stage 1

The teachers performance is conditioned by competencies of:

Understanding the role of the school
Understanding children and learning
Understanding the curriculum
Understanding "self" and "others"
Skills in communicating
Skills in working with children
Skills in comprehending and applying theoretical constructs

The parallel to this in school program is that:
The school program is conditioned by:

Purposes being sought
Curriculum content
Organizational structure
Instructional facilities
Staff competency and performance

There is an obvious relation and interaction between these two.

Stage 2

At this stage in teacher growth the teacher is involved in making personal assessments.

The parellel in school programs is the evaluation of that program. Again there is obviously an interaction between these two.

At the next stage in teacher growth the teacher is helped by the school and the college to identify his problems and special needs.

At the same stage in school program development the changing needs of the program are identified. Again there is interaction.

In the final stage the teacher is provided by the college and the school with opportunities to learn how to meet his problems.

The last stage in school program is when activities are initiated to change the program to more adequately meet needs. The interaction here also seems obvious.

These parellel and interacting constructs provide a basis on which the differing involvements of the colleges and schools can be built and distinguished from each other. As we see it, the college might well be a full

partner with the school and the teacher in providing for teacher growth while school program development would remain the original jurisdiction of the school with only as much college involvement as the school might invite largely I suspect in the nature of consultant help.

Teacher Selection in an Era of Teacher Militancy

As I have suggested earlier, the teacher selection process is certain to be affected by the rise of teacher militancy. Teachers' organizations are likely in the future to include in agreements signed with boards of education clauses dealing with the initial selection of teachers and with the process of evaluating probationary teachers for the granting of tenure status.

Some have already done so. For example, the 1966-67 agreement between the board of the Taylor Township (Michigan) Schools and the Taylor Federation of Teachers contains the following articles:

Article VII - Prerequisites for Employment. This article contains some general statements regarding such things as training, experience, certification, and personal qualities. For example-"Consideration shall be given such qualities as personality, alertness, range of interests, sense of humor, happy disposition, vitality, good appearance, ability to get along with others, and to deal courteously with the public." It also cites the procedures for employment including such items as how the application is

to be made and the categories of information it shall include, the sort of investigation which shall be conducted, and who shall conduct the interviews.

> Investigation - A careful analysis of the candidate's formal preparation to teach is made as related to the nature, type and amount and whether the training is in the area to which the candidate desires to teach. Investigation is also made into the informal preparation of the candidate in such matters as interests, travel, reading and other experiences which add to the teacher's ability to teach.
>
> Interview - Interviews will be conducted by the Superintendent and/or his representative. At his discretion, the Superintendent may include a Board of Interviewers consisting of additional administrative personnel.

Article X - Probationary Employees, Tenure and Termination. This article cites some general procedural conditions which must be met before a probationary employee can be declared unsatisfactory, for example:

> Before a probationary teacher can be declared unsatisfactory, he must have supervision or guidance by the principal, with a statement in writing issued to the teacher and Superintendent 60 days prior to the end of year by the immediate authority explaining his status by evaluation of his work to date. The final decision is to be determined by the Board of Education. The evaluation process to determine the proficiency and ability of a probationary teacher will follow the general pattern established by the Michigan State Tenure Law.
>
> The principal of the building shall be responsible for the initial evaluation of the classromm teacher, utilizing primarily two methods: (1) Periodic classroom visits and conferences. (2) Written evaluation forms in November and February which must be forwarded to the Superintendents office. During the process of the written evaluation, the principal and classroom teacher will confer on the positive aspects and the weaknesses of the classroom teacher. If after the initial evaluation in November the principal deems it advisable, he may seek assistance from the Superintendent's office for further assistance in evaluation.

> If any written evaluation to the Superintendent's office is of a negative nature, the Superintendent will confer with the principal and classroom teacher. If, by sixty (60) days prior to the end of the school year, the classroom teacher is deemed to be unsatisfactory, he shall be notified in writing that his contract shall not be renewed for the forthcoming school year.

All these provisions seem innocuous enough. For the most part they merely formalize procedures and criteria commonly used now by administrators. I am not therefore viewing such provisions with alarm but merely citing them as examples of the interest of teachers' organizations in the selection process.

I think, however, that it is safe to say that these organizations will move more and more into this area and that there is a good possibility that eventually they will demand a full partnership in the selection process.

Dick Dashiell in an article in the September Kappan has suggested that the time is already near when this may be the case in Michigan. He writes:

> The pace of teacher representation has developed so quickly and moved so speedily that many knowledgeable people--including association leaders--foresee the day when Michigan teachers will have to belong to the local, state, and national organizations in order to hold a job, or perhaps even to find employment in the first place.

Later on in the article the same writer says:

> M.E.A. (Michigan Education Association) officials prophesy that teachers, like doctors and lawyers, will decide who can enter their profession, and will police their colleagues under a professional practices act. This act would provide licensing of teachers through a teacher-appointed, teacher-constituted licensing agency. Judicial procedures under the law would include a structure for disciplining and discharging teachers. In effect, the act would legalize the Code of Ethics of the teaching profession, and make teachers a self-regulating group.

Obviously if teachers control or even share substantially in the admission to the profession then they will be sharing in the selection process.

The Taylor Township agreement applies to employment at the local district level directly. The predictions from Michigan apply to admission to the profession which presumably would occur at the state level and thus only indirectly at the local level.

There are, I think, two kinds of motivation for this interest on the part of teachers' organizations:

(1) They are interested in the quality of education. While this interest may be obscured by some of their demands particularly in the earlier and more bellicose stage of the development of collective bargaining in education, there is no reason to believe that teachers as a group will be any less interested in quality education than are teachers singular or any less interested than are administrators. Hopefully, as collective bargaining in education matures and becomes legitimatized it will turn more to teachers' interest in and responsibility for quality education.

(2) The preservation of any organization requires that it have some control on admission into its membership. A teacher once employed by a local district becomes eligible for membership in the local, state and national organizations. This pool of teachers constitutes the body politic of the teacher organization to which the leadership must turn for funds, for

approval of plans and actions and for new leadership. The body politic then constitutes and controls the input of the organization and therefore determines what it is and is to become. Naturally any organization will seek to control if possible this input. Teachers' organizations can do this in two general ways:

(1) by controlling entry into the profession and thus determining the pool of eligible members on a state or national level,

(2) by controlling or sharing in employment decisions at the local level and thus affecting the actual membership in the various parts of the organization.

Because I perceive organizational needs this way, I am inclined to think the Dashiel article correct and would extend it to other states as well.

Administrators then, are faced with the need to decide on how they will react to sharing in the teacher selection process. Many of them, of course, already envolve teachers in a variety of ways, but this is done individually and on invitation. In the future it may be done collectively and on demand--and that is quite a horse of another color.

While I do not want to be in the position of suggesting to teachers new demands for them to make, I do think that this may be an area where the wisest thing may be for the administration to invite teacher organizations to share in this process before they get around to demanding it. If this is done

it may be much easier to shape that participation in reasonable and beneficial terms. If we wait until it is demanded it is much more likely to result in dysfunctional restrictions on the selection process.

Conclusion

I fear that I have wandered excessively through this topic. I hope that the wandering has not been irresponsible. I even dare to hope that you may have found some of it instructive.

I rely now on the good judgement of this distinguished panel to correct my errors and point out my omissions.

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